



Shareholder Newsletter July 16, 2014 Vol. 15, No. 4

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Meet an Intern...

Leigh is with us on the farm for her first season. We were happy to have her as a market helper in Takoma Park last year, and, as we thought she would, she's stepped up beautifully to the many tasks here on the farm. Her organized approach and drive to get jobs done will serve her well in any future farming endeavor. Here's what she has to say.

Hello everyone! My name is Leigh and this is my first season at Waterpenny. I am from California where farming is a whole different ball game and it has been so interesting to learn how an organic farm on the east coast works and operates. I love the change of seasons and it also makes you much more appreciative of what you have WHEN you have it. It has been a great season so far with Eric, Rachel, and the Waterpenny crew. In the past few years I have moved a lot; from Sweden, to Zambia, back home again, to DC and have now landed in this little gem of an area. Sperryville is so beautiful and the community is so kind and delightful!

Before Waterpenny I was urban farming in DC, or should I say vegetable gardening. I stumbled across Waterpenny at the Takoma Park farmers market in DC and had also heard of them from my co-worker at the time. She raved about the farm and their stand was by far the most vibrant and welcoming! I was intrigued! As fun as vegetable gardening in the big city was, I knew I wanted the real deal; I wanted to learn how to be a farmer. As much as my desire to being at the root of food justice has led me here, I've always loved manual labor jobs and having my hands dirty all day as well; getting to play with plants and watch them transform from seeds, to babies, to full maturity and ending on my plate as some colorful, delectable grub.

I hope to finish the season at Waterpenny with the basic knowledge of how to start up a small-scale farm as well as how to drive a tractor! Eric and Rachel have been amazing teachers thus far and I cannot wait as we climb to the peak of our season this year.

Farm notes...

This week you'll find the first melons and tomatoes in your share—the sweet, heat-loving crops are here!

For the best flavor, tomatoes should not be refrigerated. Keep them on the counter and let them finish ripening, then slice them up! We grow many colors of tomatoes, and you'll get to know them better this year.

Melons will be ripe when they have an undertone of sandy orange and smell sweet at the stem scar. They can be refrigerated, and should be when ripe.



Above, a few Early Girl tomatoes are ready! More green ones to follow. We trellis tomatoes for easier harvest.

Below, Leigh helps transplant our 4th melon planting, which will be ready to harvest in September. This field was mulched ahead of planting.



Hail to the Leaf!

We have had a lot of afternoon thunderstorms coming through the farm in the last few weeks, which means we've done very little irrigating this year. The two times it has gotten dry enough to hook everything up and start running the irrigation pump, a huge storm has arrived within a few hours and dumped at least an inch of rain on the fields just when they needed it.

One of the storms, however, brought about 15 minutes of hail along with the rain, and vegetable plants never need hail. Many of the leaves of our more sensitive plants ended up with lots of little holes in them, including squash, cucumbers, melons, chard, and the Malabar spinach described at right. Luckily the hail didn't last too long, the damaged leaves look pretty good all things considered, and there won't be many long-term effects of the storm. We definitely escaped the major problems some friends have had in previous years, with ill-timed hail destroying large percentages of peppers, tomatoes, winter squash, and even garlic., by both stripping the leaves off the plants and denting the fruits themselves. We feel lucky that we hardly ever get hail on our farm, and we hope we've seen the last of it for a while.



We've had some success with a few new crops this year, including the fennel in the shares a few weeks ago. Above is our trial of Malabar spinach, a leafy, vining green that grows well in the heat of the summer. Our fellow vendors at the farmer's market suggested we give it a try, and it's looking good so far. Soon we'll start picking the leaves, which you can use just like spinach, raw or cooked. We made a trellis for the plants the same way we do for tomatoes, giving the vines something to climb on throughout the summer. You'll see some in your future shares!

You couldn't pay us enough

(and our farm isn't big enough) to grow sweet corn for the shares, but we have a small garden with some for Isaac and Nicholas, by the swing set. Each year, they choose to grow corn; the sweetness is wonderful when eaten freshly picked. It's good that we got these few when we did, because Raccoons feasted on the rest a few nights later. We're busy trying to design a way to keep them away from the beautiful circle of popcorn that's also growing. Another perennial favorite: cherry tomatoes. Those, you'll be finding in future shares.



Sautéed Greens with Cannellini Beans and Garlic

From Epicurious.com

A great side, but also a nice vegetarian dinner when made with vegetable broth and served over rice.

- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/4 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- 1 large bunch greens (such as chard, spinach, mustard greens, kale, or broccoli rabe; about 1 pound), thick stems removed, cut into 1-inch strips (about 10 cups packed)
- 1 cup (or more) vegetable broth or low-salt chicken broth
- 1 15-ounce can cannellini (white kidney beans), rinsed, drained
- 1 teaspoon (or more) Sherry wine vinegar

Heat 4 tablespoons oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and dried crushed pepper; stir until garlic is pale golden, about 1 minute. Add greens by large handfuls; stir just until beginning to wilt before adding more, tossing with tongs to coat with oil.

Add 1 cup broth, cover, and simmer until greens are just tender, adding more broth by tablespoonfuls if dry, 1 to 10 minutes, depending on type of greens. Add beans; simmer uncovered until beans are heated through and liquid is almost absorbed, about 2 minutes. Stir in 1 teaspoon vinegar. Season with salt and pepper, and more vinegar if desired; drizzle with remaining 1 tablespoon oil and serve.

